

WARTIME IMPACTS UPON THE SCHOOLS¹

by

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The present plight of the rural schools of the nation is no new phenomenon. Conditions are merely more acute now than in normal times. When there are general shortages of professional services, whether these services be those offered by teachers, doctors, ministers or others, the cities usually outbid the rural people and many of the most competent rural professionals leave the country. That is what is happening now.

NEW TEACHERS

Actually, as Table 1 indicates, there is no greater shortage of teachers in the rural schools than in the urban. In neither place were there many fewer teachers October 15, 1942 than October 15, 1941. However, mere numbers cannot be taken as the sole measure of the impact of the war upon the teaching staffs of the Nation's public schools. A relatively far larger decrease in the men teachers is recorded for the rural than for the urban schools.² (Table 1). Actually of the teachers who left the rural schools, a smaller proportion went to the armed forces than was the case for the urban schools but a considerably larger proportion of both men and women teachers left rural schools for other teaching jobs. (Table 2). Since urban teachers are relatively better paid it is logical to assume that many teachers who were last year teaching in rural schools are this year teaching in urban schools. In other words rural schools lose teachers for the same reason that other schools lose them and in addition because they fail to compete successfully with the urban schools which are recruiting rural teachers to replace those lost in the armed forces and elsewhere. Also war industries have taken a relatively large number of rural teachers.

The seriousness of the adjustment being made by the rural schools in meeting the drain on the teacher supply is revealed by the proportions of new teachers possessing emergency certificates. A far larger proportion of the new teachers in rural schools and small towns have emergency certificates than is the case for urban teachers. Thus, for schools in rural areas, places between 2,500 and 9,999; 10,000 and 29,999; 30,000 and 99,999; and 100,000 and over the percentages of teachers who were in the systems reporting this year but not in these same systems last year and who were teaching with emergency certificates were respectively 19, 19, 14, 8, and 7.

The significance of the large proportion of new teachers in rural and small town schools who are teaching with emergency certificates becomes apparent when it is realized that a relatively large proportion of rural teachers are new teachers. As of October 15, 1942, 101,000 or 72 per cent of the 140,000 teachers who held new positions in the nation were rural teachers. Thus of the 443,183 rural teachers in the nation, 23 per cent were new teachers. Of the 413,568 teachers in places over 2,500 in size only 9 per cent held new positions. The per cent of teachers holding new positions for schools in the rural areas, places between 2,500 and 9,999; 10,000 and 29,999; 30,000 and 99,999 and 100,000 or more were roughly estimated as follows: 23, 18, 6, 11, and 3. If we are correct in assuming that teachers with emergency certificates are less competent than teachers with regular certificates it is evident that the quality of teaching in rural and small town schools has suffered greatly. Approximately 19,190 teachers or 4.3 per cent of all teachers in rural schools were teaching with emergency certificates at the beginning of the present school year.³

1. Acknowledgments are due to Emery Foster, Chief, Division of Statistics, U.S. Office of Education for supplying data in preliminary form for this article. However, the author assumes full responsibility for the conclusions drawn.

2. Of 412 unfilled rural high school positions as reported October 15, 1942 the per cent distribution of subject matter specialties of the positions was as follows. Physical Education, 20.0; Industrial Arts, 17.0; Commercial Education, 16.0; Agriculture, 15.3; Mathematics, 13.8; Chemistry, 6.1; Physics, 5.6; Home Economics, 4.1; and Trades and Industry, 2.1. It should be noted that training most useful to the Army, War Production and Agriculture suffers from these shortages.

3. During the school years 1940-41 and 1941-42, 41 states reported the issuance of 2,305 and 4,655 emergency certificates. These were not broken down into rural and urban positions, and there is little knowledge about the 7 states not reporting. Officials assume the states which did not report did not issue many certificates.

Table 1. Number of teachers employed October 15, 1941 and October 15, 1942 and per cent of change by size of place and sex.¹

Size of Place	Number of teachers employed in schools reporting October 15 ¹				Per cent change from 1941 to 1942		
	1941		1942		Both Men and Women		
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
100,000 or more	11,438	46,758	10,463	44,879	-8.52	-4.02	-4.90
30,000 - 99,999	7,601	26,337	6,493	26,378	-14.58	+ .16	-3.14
10,000 - 29,999	9,503	28,179	8,395	28,680	-11.66	+1.78	-1.61
2,500 - 9,999	10,463	28,722	9,111	29,679	-12.92	+3.33	-1.01
Rural	22,792	72,708	18,346	74,867	-19.51	+2.97	-2.39

¹/ Based upon sample data including schools at which 39.7 per cent of the 413,568 urban teachers and 21 per cent of the 443,183 rural teachers were employed October 15, 1942.

Table 2. Teachers leaving public school systems from the end of the 1941-42 school year to October 15, 1942 by size of place and sex classified by reason for leaving.¹

Reason for leaving	Total											
	(All sizes of place)		100,000 or more		30,000 to 99,999		10,000 to 29,999		2,500 to 9,999		Rural	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Entering												
Armed forces	46.3	1.9	55.1	2.1	53.8	2.9	52.1	2.9	48.3	2.9	41.7	1.2
Government												
Federal	6.1	5.0	4.4	.8	7.5	3.5	6.3	5.4	6.4	6.6	6.0	5.4
State or local	1.0	.8	1.4	.1	.7	.5	.8	.6	.7	.4	1.1	1.1
War industries	12.5	5.8	11.2	1.3	11.0	2.9	11.2	3.4	10.4	5.6	14.0	7.6
Other business												
and industries	4.4	4.3	4.7	3.3	3.6	3.0	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.6	4.6
Other teaching												
job	19.3	30.2	4.6	2.4	10.1	13.1	15.2	21.9	23.7	33.8	22.1	38.2
Not rehired	3.9	6.4	4.1	2.5	4.8	5.0	3.4	6.4	3.1	6.6	4.3	7.2
Retired (age, etc.)	1.9	5.8	6.8	16.2	3.6	15.5	1.8	7.0	.9	4.3	1.3	2.8
Married	-	26.1	-	48.0	-	32.2	-	33.5	-	27.5	-	19.4
Other	4.6	13.7	7.7	23.3	4.9	21.4	4.7	14.3	2.3	8.0	4.9	12.5

¹/ From large to small places as classified the number of school systems reporting were as follows: 46, 134, 394, 1041, and 1376, respectively.

Unfortunately, the issuance of emergency certificates has not as yet been tabulated by areas. However, rural teacher shortages are somewhat related to estimated total population shifts. The Mountain States which suffered the greatest reported loss in population between May 1, 1940 and April 1, 1942, also reported the greatest decrease in teachers between October 15 of the present school year and October 15, 1941. Since general population increases were usually the result of wartime increases in urban centers, an increase in the rural teachers in states with many expanding centers would not be expected. Actually, the Pacific Coast States, which increased most, suffered a reduction in rural teachers. No doubt many of the teachers from this region as well as those from other areas went to expand further the urban population of such centers as Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco, centers which according to estimates increased over 90,000 each during the two years previous to April 1942.⁴ It is not surprising that states near cities such as Chicago, Detroit and St. Louis with an estimated increase in population of 149,000, 336,000, 97,000 respectively, for the two years previous to April 1942 should have lost rural teachers. Teacher shortages in states near Washington, D. C., and Norfolk, Va., areas where tremendous population increases were reported, were exceptions in that for these states shortages in rural teachers were not great.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Previous to the war, two major factors were influencing public school enrollment. The declining birth rate had for some years been reducing enrollment in the elementary grades and increased desire for education and population factors were increasing enrollment in high schools up until last year. Thus, between the school years 1939-1940 and 1940-1941 elementary enrollment decreased 1.33 per cent and high school enrollment increased 1.70 per cent. The next year elementary school enroll-

ment decreased 1.7 per cent and for the first time high school enrollment fell off, decreasing 3.2 per cent. Population factors would have accounted for some of the decrease in high school enrollment the last two years.⁵ However, the impact of the war is far more important in this decline than population changes. Differences in this year's enrollment changes of girls and boys as indicated in Table 3 makes this evident. Rural high schools are losing students but not in quite such large proportions as are urban high schools. No doubt migration factors account for many of the rural-urban differences in enrollment decreases for the present year as reflected in Table 3. Families leaving for cities took children of high school and elementary age with them. The children of high school age were more likely to get employment and discontinue their education than were the children in the elementary grades. The children of rural migrants in the elementary grades boosted the urban enrollment thus in some measure counteracting the normal decrease in the cities.

As the 18 and 19 year old boys are drafted, high school enrollment may change even more. Of the total male population of 2,485,000 18 and 19 years of age, 769,800 are in school and 338,000 in high school. Most of the high school students 18 and 19 years of age are seniors.⁶

TRANSPORTATION

The rural schools are caught on the horns of a dilemma in their attempt to adjust to decreases in enrollment and the increasing difficulties in making teacher replacements on the one hand and shortages in transportation facilities on the other. Most recent data on the closing of one-teacher, one-room elementary school buildings indicate that the consolidation movement is continuing. In the decade from the school year 1929-30 to 1939-40 one-teacher schools decreased from 148,712 to 113,600, a decrease of 23.6. Thus, for the nation, the proportion of pupils transported by school vehicles was contin-

4. Population estimates were based mainly on Sugar War Ration Book Number 1 taken from U.S. Bureau of Census releases. Series P-3, No. 30 and 31, October 27 and December 1, 1942. The estimated percentage changes in civilian population between April 1, 1940 and May 1, 1942 by geographic divisions are as follows: New England, 0.2; Middle Atlantic, -2.2; East North Central, +1.8; West North Central, -3.6; South Atlantic, 2.2; East South Central, -0.1; West South Central, +0.2; Mountain, -4.0; and Pacific, +3.4. Corresponding percentage changes in rural teachers between October 15, 1941 and October 15, 1942 are as follows: -3.2, -2.0, -4.0, -2.0, +1.2, -3.0, -4.3, -5.0, and -4.7.

5. David T. Blose, *Statistics of State School Systems 1940-41*. U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1942.

6. *Education for Victory*, U.S. Office of Education, Vol. 1, No. 19, Dec. 1, 1942, Washington, D.C., p. 16.

ually increased so that for the school year 1939-40, 16.3 per cent of all pupils, both rural and urban, were thus transported. It is estimated that it will be necessary to keep in operation and repair approximately 93,000 transportation vehicles, most of which are motor busses, to transport the 4 million pupils who ride to school each day. This will require that approximately 450,000 tires be kept in condition for daily use.⁷ Since most of this equipment is used by rural pupils, shortages in it and lack of drivers will harm rural schools more than urban schools.⁸

SUMMARY

From October 15, 1941 to October 15, 1942 there was reported a decrease in the number of rural teachers amounting to about 2 per cent. Since during the same period the rural school enrollment decreased approximately 4 per cent, the rural schools are not as yet suffering from a great shortage of teachers. However, the turnover of rural teachers for this period was greater than for urban teachers and a much larger percentage of the new teachers in

rural and small town schools are now teaching with emergency certificates than is the case for city teachers. As of October 15, 1942, 23 per cent of the rural teachers were new to their present positions and 4.3 per cent of all rural teachers were teaching with emergency certificates. Comparable percentages for schools in places of over 2,500 inhabitants were 9 and 1.2. Also, the relative decrease in male teachers in the rural and small town schools was much greater than that reported for the city schools. Thus, the teaching staffs of the rural schools have suffered from the same drains as have the urban schools but in addition have lost larger proportions of their personnel to other schools which offer high salaries or other advantages. In the rural and small town schools men teachers are more frequently replaced by women and regularly certified teachers are more frequently replaced by teachers with emergency certificates than in the city schools. Decreases in enrollment and difficulties in obtaining teachers may stimulate consolidation but rural schools which are dependent upon motor vehicles are particularly vulnerable.

Table 3. Decreases in total enrollment and enrollment in city and rural high schools October 15, 1941 to October 15, 1942 by size of place and sex.

Size of Place	No. systems Reporting	Per cent decrease in enrollment					
		High Schools			All Schools		
		Boys	Girls	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls	Both Sexes
All Places	2,679	7.2	4.1	5.6	2.4	1.6	2.0
100,000 and over	36	8.5	5.6	7.0	2.3	1.6	2.0
30,000 - 99,999	108	7.7	4.7	6.2	3.1	1.8	2.5
10,000 - 29,999	344	6.5	3.5	4.9	1.8	1.4	1.6
2,500 - 9,999	930	6.9	3.9	5.3	2.8	1.7	2.2
Rural	1,261	6.6	3.2	4.8	4.9	3.4	4.2

7. Data from *Education for Victory*, *op. cit.* Vol. 1, No. 19, Dec. 1, 1942. For this year only three state reports have been received. These show large decreases in one-room schools. One of the states reported an increase in the number of school busses the other two reported decreases.

8. Various proposals have been made concerning the recruiting of drivers and the repairing of school busses. Out-of-school rural persons may take special courses offered in elementary auto mechanics and \$15,000,000 has been allocated partially for this purpose. Smith-Hughes and George-Dean funds can be used to conduct training for school bus drivers. *ibid.* Vol. 1, No. 17, Nov. 2, 1942.